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A-ONE Online Magazine  
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor  
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor  
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor  
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"  
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"  
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"  
Rob Mahlert -- Web site  
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Fred Horvat

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->From the Editor's Keyboard

"Saying it like it is!"

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Well, hoping that I won't bring any bad luck to myself by mentioning it, there were no personal tragic events over this past week! One could say that we've seen enough to last us for quite some time, but there's never a guarantee in life. So, I'll be satisfied that it's been a relatively quiet week!

Quiet, but not devoid of activity. We've been trying to move forward and help my in-laws move forward with their lives. That means getting all kinds of paperwork filed and replaced to get back to some semblance of normal again. We've been looking for a new residence, and much more. And, at the same time, I'm still working on getting things straightened out with my father's estate. Lots of paperwork and red tape; it's a daunting task, but something that needs doing. Never a dull moment...

Well, it's pretty much all over but the weeping - Mitt Romney will likely become the GOP presidential candidate for the upcoming election. It will be interesting to see if the Republican Party can get unified to put together a strong campaign. I'm not sure that it can, but we'll all have to wait and see. I can say that this will be an ugly, negative campaign from both sides. The script almost writes itself.

Until next time...

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#### Who Is Jack Tramiel? Home Computer Pioneer's Legacy

Jack Tramiel, founder of Commodore International and former CEO of Atari International, died on Sunday at the age of 83. He was surrounded by family at the time of his passing, according to Forbes.

Famous for saying that computers should be built "for masses, not the classes," Tramiel played an important role in the early days of personal computing and video gaming, as his company introduced a line of powerful but affordable home computers, including the popular Commodore 64. The latter became the best-selling home computer of all time, with an

estimated 20 to 30 million units sold, though Tramiel wasn't one to brag. In fact, he was most content when not in the spotlight.

In an interview with CNET in 2007, Tramiel said, "I'm quite happy if people do not know me." However, it's hard not to know a man whose contributions and life story are so unforgettable.

Born in Lodz, Poland on December 13, 1928, Tramiel's family was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp shortly after Germany's invasion of Poland during World War II. While his mother remained at Auschwitz, Tramiel and his father were later moved to the Ahlem labor camp near Hanover, where he remained until he was rescued by American forces in April 1945.

Tramiel then emigrated to the United States in November 1947 and learned to fix typewriters during his stint with the Army, which led to him opening a office machinery repair shop in the Bronx in 1953 called the Commodore Portable Typewriter.

Soon, the company, which went public in 1962, went from building typewriters to calculators and finally to computers, starting with the Commodore PET in 1977 and then peaking with the best-selling Commodore 64, which debuted in January 1982.

Two years later, Tramiel resigned from Commodore, and took a brief break from the computing industry. However, he returned in July 1984 when he bought the consumer division of Atari, which was going through tough times as a result of the video game crash of 1983. Tramiel remained at Atari till 1996 and oversaw a number of products, including the Atari ST, before selling the company to the JTS Corporation.

As much as Tramiel had an impact on the computing industry and personal technology, it appears he also had a direct impact on the people who worked for him. Bil Herd, who was employed by Commodore from 1983 to 1986, told CNET he traveled all the way across the country to see his former boss one more time for the 25th anniversary of the Commodore 64. Of his time at the company, Herd said, "You learned not to give excuses. You learned to just get it done."

A sentiment that was echoed by Tramiel at the same event. "The computer business today is different than it was in 1975," said Tramiel. "In some ways it's good, and in some ways it's bad. But the important part is that we all work hard to bring it to the way it is, and people say, 'How can you live without a computer?' which is wonderful."

Tramiel is survived by his wife Helen, three sons Gary, Sam, and Leonard, and their extended families.

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Wii U Coming in November!  
\*\*\*\*\* Alleged Xbox Security Problem!  
GameStop Will Warn Consumers!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

### Wii U Coming November 18

Correspondence received by WiiUDaily and IGN indicates that Nintendo's Wii U home console is heading for a mid-November debut.

The console is designed to work with old Wii games and controllers as well as software designed for the Wii U's new tablet-style interface.

WiiUDaily's leaked launch date is supposed to have come by way of Japanese retail store Media Land, with an internal memo detailing a Sunday, November 18 launch in North America and November 25 debut for Japan.

IGN's information claims to hail from a GameStop Regional Manager, and again pegs the Wii U for a November 18 release in North America at least.

The date ties in with previous North American launches for the Wii (November 19, 2006) and GameCube (November 18, 2001). Though the Wii U's European plans are not mentioned, the regional launch for the Wii began December 8, 2006.

Nintendo formally confirmed the Wii U at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in June 2011 and is expected to lay out plans for its 2012 release at this year's event.

Rumors are already starting to fly about Microsoft and Sony's rival consoles, thought likely to arrive in 2013, though the two manufacturers may prefer to push the hands-free Kinect and portable Vita during this year's presentations.

### Microsoft Probing Alleged Xbox Security Problem

Microsoft is investigating findings by researchers that its Xbox 360 gaming console permanently stores credit card numbers on its hard drive creating a potential security vulnerability for card holders.

"We are conducting a thorough investigation into the researchers' claims," Jim Alkove, general manager of Microsoft's security of interactive entertainment business, said in a statement published at Joystiq.

"We have requested information that will allow us to investigate the console in question and have still not received the information needed to replicate the researchers' claims," he added.

The alleged security flaw was revealed by researchers at Drexel and Dakota State universities. The team purchased a refurbished Xbox and used a commonly available software tool to burrow into the file system on the gaming console. It took some sweat equity, but the researchers eventually pried loose the credit card information for the original owner of the Xbox.

"Microsoft does a great job of protecting their proprietary information, but they don't do a great job of protecting the user's data," Ashley Podhradsky, a researcher who helped find the alleged vulnerability, told Kotaku, a gaming website.

The researchers, who include Rob D'Ovidio and Cindy Casey, of Drexel, and Pat Engebretson, of Dakota State, released their findings last August, but it wasn't until stories about their research began appearing on the Internet last week that Microsoft took action on the matter.

Microsoft discounted the researchers' findings. "Xbox is not designed to store credit card data locally on the console, and as such seems unlikely credit card data was recovered by the method described," Alkove stated.

"Additionally," he continued, "when Microsoft refurbishes used consoles we have processes in place to wipe the local hard drives of any other user data. We can assure Xbox owners we take the privacy and security of their personal data very seriously."

In an abstract of their findings, the researchers explained that gaming consoles, just like PCs need proper sanitization processes to help fight identity theft. "[Y]ou cannot simply throw away a computer that has your personal data on it without some sort of sanitization process; gaming consoles are no different," they wrote. "Simply returning your console back to 'factory state' will not do the trick."

"In this research paper the authors aim to bring awareness to the gaming public, researchers and practitioners that improperly discarding used consoles without proper sanitization practices can inadvertently release personal data which can result in identity theft," they added.

When retiring an old Xbox, the researchers recommend physically removing the HD from the console and running a software sanitizer on the drive.

When selecting a tool, they added, it is important to select one that emphasizes patterns in write fill in addition to passes. "This is imperative to making sure that slack and unallocated space is overwritten," they wrote.

#### GameStop Will Warn Consumers About Online Fees

Games buyers visiting GameStop stores in California will soon see signs warning them of the likelihood of additional publisher fees for downloadable content for used games.

Today, a class settlement was reached forcing the retailer to post signs in its California stores for the next two years. GameStop is also required to reimburse certain consumers who paid for used games without realizing there would be extra fees for online play.

The lawsuit was instigated in March 2010, soon after a gamer, James Collins, bought a used copy of Dragon Age: Origins from a GameStop store in Hayward, California. Collins paid \$55 for the game, \$5 less than a brand new copy, only to realize he had to pay more to access online features which would have come as standard with a new game.

Mark Pifko, Baron and Budd attorney and counsel in the lawsuit said, "We are pleased that as a result of this lawsuit, we were able to obtain complete restitution for consumers, with actual money paid out to people who were harmed by GameStop's conduct."

He added, "The in-store and online warnings are an important benefit under the settlement as well, because if GameStop discloses the truth to consumers, it is unlikely that they will be able to continue selling used copies of certain games for only \$5 less than the price of a new copy. In fact, we already know that not long after the lawsuit was filed, GameStop lowered prices for used copies of many of the game titles identified in the lawsuit."

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Global Cyber Arms Race Engulfing Web

A global cyber arms race is engulfing the Internet and the best way to counter the rapidly escalating threat is combining the efforts of U.S. agencies, private firms and international allies, cyber security officials said on Tuesday.

Cyber experts from across the U.S. government, speaking at a conference at Georgetown University, said organized crime, espionage and security activity on the Internet pose a rising threat to U.S. intellectual property, military superiority and critical infrastructure.

"What we're looking at is a global cyber arms race," said Rear Admiral Samuel Cox, director of intelligence at U.S. Cyber Command, which was set up 18 months ago to protect Pentagon computer networks and conduct offensive cyber operations if the president orders them.

"It's not proceeding at a leisurely or even a linear fashion but in fact is accelerating. I wouldn't claim that it's following Moore's law, but the curve looks kind of similar," he said, referring to a computer industry rule of thumb that computer processing power doubles every couple of years.

Howard Schmidt, cyber security coordinator at the White House, said more than \$8 trillion worth of transactions were carried over wired and wireless networks each year.

"This is not just a national security issue," he told the conference.

"It's a national security, public safety as well as economic."

Officials said the most effective way to counter the threat is to adopt an approach that promotes collaboration among government agencies and reaches out to private industry as well as international partners.

"To really operate effectively in cyberspace ... it's really a team sport," said Steven Schleien, the principal director for cyber policy at the Pentagon.

That's why the Defense Department has been working with private companies and allies like NATO, Japan and South Korea to discuss information sharing and coordinated responses to incidents on the Internet, he said.

NATO wants to bring all of the civilian and military networks in the organization under the wing of the NATO Computer Incident Response Capability by the end of 2012, which would allow a coordinated response to cyber attacks.

The United States has begun discussions on cyber security with Japan, South Korea and New Zealand, and is working closely with the Britain and Australia on a "full spectrum" of cooperation in cyberspace, Schleien said.

The United States does not view arms control treaties as a means of dealing with the problem but would like to see the international community agree on norms of behavior for cyberspace, he said.

"This is not an area where arms control works. I don't know what we would monitor. I don't know how we would verify anything in terms of cyber weapons or cyber tools," Schleien said.

Discussions on norms of behavior would begin to address the issue of how to fight proxies who carry out Internet attacks on behalf of governments, and "hactivists," who attack computer networks for their own political ends.

"How do you deal with hactivists from your soil?" Schleien asked. "Are you responsible as a sovereign nation for what comes out of your country?"

The issues are sensitive and complex. A U.S. nonprofit group, for example, concluded Russian civilians acting with advance notice of Russian military intentions carried out cyber attacks in the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict.

Some websites used to organize those attacks were hosted in the United States.

#### China Web Giants Promise To Fight "Rumors"

Three of China's largest Internet companies have promised the government they will take steps to banish online rumors, state media said on Tuesday, as the ruling Communist Party fights jitters over a tricky leadership transition.

A dispatch by the official Xinhua news agency made no mention of rumors of a foiled coup in Beijing that spread on the Internet in past weeks, after the abrupt ousting of Bo Xilai, a contender for a spot in the new

central leadership to be unveiled at a party congress later this year.

But the article was the latest in a series carried by state media lambasting online rumors and those who spread them.

The March 15 ouster of Bo as party chief of the inland city of Chongqing, linked to a scandal involving a senior aide, has shaken the party ahead of the leadership changes.

After Bo was sacked, popular microblogs, including those run by Sina Corp. and Tencent Holdings Ltd, were awash with speculation about a coup.

Xinhua said that both companies, along with top search engine Baidu Inc, would "resolutely support and cooperate with relevant government departments in measures to fight and clear up online rumors".

They would also "earnestly fulfill their responsibility to society, follow the law, increase management of the Internet and adopt effective measures" to guard against rumors.

While the coup rumors were unfounded, their spread and the tightening of Internet controls and warnings to ignore such talk have reflected worries about stability after Bo's fall.

Last week, China's top military newspaper told troops to ignore online rumors.

And in late March, authorities shut 16 Chinese websites and detained six people accused of spreading rumors about unusual military movements and security in the capital.

The rumors fed on speculation about the ousting of Bo over a month after his vice mayor, Wang Lijun, fled to a U.S. consulate, triggering a scandal exposing accusations of infighting and abuses of power.

#### Apple Founder Fears Patent War Fallout

The man who co-founded Apple - the world's most valuable company - in the garage of Steve Jobs' parents, fears the torrent of intellectual property lawsuits being filed by companies such as Apple, Samsung, Google, HTC and Nokia could prevent future entrepreneurs from treading a path to technology fortune.

Speaking to The Australian Financial Review, Steve Wozniak says most big technology companies are not truly innovative, and that start-ups looking to make technology devices face the prospect of spending large chunks of their scarce capital on buying up previously unused patents.

"I care so much about the young person that has some technical knowledge and wants to start their own business," Wozniak says.

"Companies like Apple, Facebook, Twitter and Yahoo! all started by new thinkers with new ideas. Now, with this big patent situation, there are certain categories that are heavily blocked off because the big companies make sure they own it all."

Wozniak says he experienced the frustration caused by unused patents when

he designed the breakthrough Apple II computer, launched in 1977.

Having designed a system to translate letters into dots that could be put on a screen, he discovered a company called RCA already had a patent on it.

"Only a huge company with vast sums of money could have afforded to do the research when they did, because you couldn't make an affordable product that used that technology at the time," Wozniak says.

"We actually wound up paying them two bucks for every computer we shipped just for that simple idea .?.?. That sort of thing is going to crop up over and over = very simple ideas that the big companies with big money are going to own, and the small guy who starts up is going to have to pay."

Wozniak says that, while a growing number of technology specialists think the patent system should be scrapped, he still believes it is essential to encourage young inventors who aspire to do something new.

He can appreciate the argument that Apple has now come to represent to today's entrepreneurs what RCA was to him, but Wozniak believes Apple's record for continued innovation means it is less guilty than any of the other large tech firms.

"Apple is the good guy on the block of all of them," he says. "It is creating so much and is so successful and it is not just following the formulas of other companies - [Apple is] totally establishing new markets that didn't exist."

While hardly an impartial observer, Wozniak's view that Apple is a company that stands apart from the rest of the market is one that is increasingly convincing the cynical investment community.

Two analyst firms in the United States predicted last week that Apple shares, which are now \$US633.68, could top \$US1000 in the near future, making it the world's first trillion-dollar company.

Wozniak spoke about the possibility of Apple stock reaching \$US1000 earlier this year to Bloomberg, but admits he is no financial expert.

However, he says that the unique eco-system that Apple has built around digital content and retail is the reason that investment specialists are so buoyant about the company. "The retail process is owned by Apple, the application is owned by Apple, the operating system is owned by Apple and the hardware is Apple's," he says.

"Apple has managed to create this entire world that all the products fit in to .?.?. there is no other company in the world that has these benefits."

Wozniak cites Hewlett-Packard as the opposite, "a big, successful company with so many different departments making servers, PCs and printers, but they are stuck with an operating system that isn't under their control. For [HP] to build up the entire structure that Apple has would take them so long that Apple has a huge lead on everybody".

Apple has been in the unusual position of nursing an image problem in recent weeks. Concerns about working conditions in its Chinese factories caused new chief executive Tim Cook to make a flying visit to Foxconn,

while misleading labelling of the new iPad as 4G-compatible in Australia led to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission taking the company to court.

Wozniak says the 4G issue is one brought about by the lack of a global standard definition. "I use 4G wireless as it stands in the US on my iPad, but that is still not nearly as fast as 3G in Turkey, for example. If you go to different parts of the world you are surprised at what is considered 3G."

He is confident about Apple's prospects post-Steve Jobs but feels that the jury is still out on the ability of Tim Cook to drive the company forward.

"It is hard to judge yet because Apple products still look like they did under Steve Jobs. Steve Jobs has stamped his mark on products that are three years in the queue," Wozniak says. "I want to see the special touches [under Cook], not just an iteration to the iPad 3."

A number of influential technology industry figures say that future will play out in a "post-PC era", where desktop computers become obsolete.

Having made his fortune building PCs, Wozniak still believes in their viability, alongside more fashionable devices. "Although we are moving towards a very mobile world, I think there is going to be room for PCs for quite a long time still," he says.

"For some work like audio or visual editing, you need the complete machine and [a] larger screen. The mobile device is great for most of the things we do with our computer - but not everything."

#### AOL and Microsoft Announce \$1.056 Billion Patent Deal

AOL Inc. announced that the Company has entered into a definitive agreement to sell over 800 of its patents and their related patent applications to Microsoft Corporation and to grant Microsoft a non-exclusive license to its retained patent portfolio for aggregate proceeds of \$1.056 billion in cash.

"We continue to hold a valuable patent portfolio as highlighted by the license we entered into with Microsoft. The combined sale and licensing arrangement unlocks current dollar value for our shareholders and enables AOL to continue to aggressively execute on our strategy to create long-term shareholder value."

Following the sale, AOL will continue to hold a significant patent portfolio of over 300 patents and patent applications spanning core and strategic technologies, including advertising, search, content generation/management, social networking, mapping, multimedia/streaming, and security among others. AOL also received a license to the patents being sold to Microsoft.

The patent sale includes the sale of the stock of an AOL subsidiary upon which AOL expects to record a capital loss for tax purposes and as a result, cash taxes in connection with the sale should be immaterial. Additionally, AOL expects to utilize approximately \$40 million of its existing deferred tax assets, representing approximately 20 percent of its total deferred tax assets, to offset any ordinary income taxes

resulting from the license of its remaining patent portfolio.

AOL management and its Board of Directors intend to return a significant portion of the sale proceeds to shareholders and will determine the most efficient and effective method to do so prior to the closing of the transaction. Pro forma for the sale and license, as of December 31, 2011, AOL would have had approximately \$15 per share of cash on hand.

"The agreement with Microsoft represents the culmination of a robust auction process for our patent portfolio," said Tim Armstrong, AOL's Chairman and CEO. "We continue to hold a valuable patent portfolio as highlighted by the license we entered into with Microsoft. The combined sale and licensing arrangement unlocks current dollar value for our shareholders and enables AOL to continue to aggressively execute on our strategy to create long-term shareholder value."

"This is a valuable portfolio that we have been following for years and analyzing in detail for several months," said Brad Smith, General Counsel and Executive Vice President, Legal and Corporate Affairs, Microsoft. "AOL ran a competitive auction and by participating, Microsoft was able to achieve our two primary goals: obtaining a durable license to the full AOL portfolio and ownership of certain patents that complement our existing portfolio."

The transaction is expected to be completed by the end of 2012, upon the satisfaction of customary conditions and regulatory approvals, including expiration or termination of the applicable waiting period under the Hart-Scott-Rodino Antitrust Improvements Act of 1976, as amended.

#### Attention Marc Andreessen: Microsoft Just Bought (Part of) Netscape

Here's a deal that would have made many minds explode back in the 1990s: Microsoft is buying Netscape. Or at least most of the important parts of the company that used to be synonymous with 'Internet.'

That's a side component of the \$1 billion patent sale that AOL and Microsoft announced this morning. As part of the transaction, AOL announced that it was selling off "stock of an AOL subsidiary" at a loss, in a move that's supposed to reduce its overall tax bill.

AOL didn't disclose the name of that subsidiary in its press release, but a person familiar with the transaction has clued me in: It's Netscape.

Microsoft will buy the underlying patents for the old browser, but AOL will hang on to the brand and the related Netscape businesses, which make up a grab bag of stuff these days: An ISP, a brand name, etc.

All of which probably makes sense on someone's ledger books. But the transaction may still make a few heads spin, at least for people who remember Internet history and/or have access to Wikipedia.

#### Two Years Left of Windows XP Support

All support for Windows XP and Office 2003 will end in two years as of

this past Sunday. Mainstream support for two other entities ends this week however. Mainstream support for Windows Vista will end on Tuesday 10th April, and for Office 2007, today.

Microsoft divides its support lifecycle into two stages: "Mainstream" and "Extended." In the Mainstream phase, software receives the full range of free security updates, stability improvements, bug fixes, and occasional new features. In the Extended phase, only security updates are freely available, though companies with paid support contracts can receive other fixes.

Windows XP and Office 2003 are currently in Extended support. Once this ends in 2014, they'll cease receiving even security updates, leaving anyone still using that software vulnerable to whatever malware the Internet throws at them.

Windows Vista and Office 2007 will be in Extended support from now until April 2017.

Update: For some reason Office 2007 has now had its Mainstream support extended for another six months, and will enter Extended support in October.

#### Mistrial After Photo Sent from Kansas Courtroom

A Kansas judge declared a mistrial in a murder trial Wednesday after a newspaper reporter tweeted a photo that included the grainy profile of a juror.

The Shawnee County district attorney's office said it plans to reschedule Austin Tabor's trial for June or July after the abrupt halt to proceedings in Topeka one day after attorneys presented opening statements.

"One of the photos apparently showed one or more of the jurors," said Lee McGowan, spokesman for the district attorney's office. "It was brought to the court's attention and ultimately a mistrial was declared."

The Topeka Capital-Journal reports Tabor, 20, is accused of shooting and killing Matthew Mitchell, 20, near Topeka West High School in 2010.

McGowan said the judge had agreed to allow camera phones in the courtroom, but said no photos were to be taken of jurors. That corresponds with rules established by the Kansas Supreme Court for cameras in courtrooms, including that individual jurors are not to be photographed.

"In courtrooms where photography is impossible without including the jury as part of the unavoidable background, the photography is permitted, but close-ups which identify individual jurors are not permitted," the court has said.

The picture, taken and tweeted by reporter Ann Marie Bush, includes the profile of a juror set against a brightly lit window.

Capital-Journal managing editor Tomari Quinn responded to comments on the newspaper's website by saying the photo was a mistake and the "reporter is miserable about it."

"The juror was seated next to a window and, on the reporter's smartphone, wasn't seen against the incoming light," Quinn wrote.

Publisher Gregg Ireland said the reporter was aware of the rules.

"The Capital-Journal regrets the error and loss of the court's time," he said. "We will use this as a training opportunity for our staff members as they strive to bring information to our readers in digital and print media."

A hearing to reschedule the trial is set for Thursday.

#### Flashback Trojan Has Infected Over Half A Million Macs

We don't normally report on security issues, especially not when they occur on Mac OS X. So far, the security issues on the Mac can barely be labelled as such, and really don't deserve a lot of attention. Now, however, it would appear we're looking at the first successful widespread malware infection on Mac OS X. Not a bad track record for an eleven year old operating system, by the way.

There's a trojan called Flashback rummaging around the web, which can infect a Mac without the need for a root password. Earlier this week, a Russian antivirus company (little red flag going up) claimed over half a million Macs were infected by the Trojan, creating a pretty sizeable botnet. Some perspective: relatively speaking, this botnet is similar in size to Conficker (both infecting about 1% of the installed base).

Just a single antivirus company making such claims is not something that piques my interest. Antivirus companies tend to be pretty sleazy, and they like nothing more than making a threat look bigger than it really is because, hey, what do you know, their antivirus product stops this particular super-dangerous cat-killing virustrojanmalwarething.

We now have a second source corroborating the figures. Kaspersky Labs (yup, another antivirus company) confirmed the figures in their own independent investigation into the matter.

"We reverse engineered the first domain generation algorithm and used the current date, 06.04.2012, to generate and register a domain name, 'krymbrjasnof.com'. After domain registration, we were able to log requests from the bots. Since every request from the bot contains its unique hardware UUID, we were able to calculate the number of active bots," Kaspersky's Igor Soumenkov writes, "Our logs indicate that a total of 600000+ unique bots connected to our server in less than 24 hours. They used a total of 620000+ external IP addresses. More than 50% of the bots connected from the United States."

In fact, according to the earlier investigation, 274 unique IP addresses came from... Cupertino.

The trojan uses a security hole in Java, which Oracle patched in February 2012; Apple didn't send out a patch until a few days ago. Get this patch and install it, because if the investigations are correct, Mac users are actually running a risk this time. If you're afraid you might be one of those ~600000, Ars has a detailed guide on how to check your machine, and if necessary, how to remove it.

Since Apple does not ship Java by default any more, I'm guessing these are mostly older machines and machines that haven't been updated to the latest release (and Minecraft players). So, especially if you belong in either of those groups, it might not hurt to give your machine a check-up.

Now, we're looking at data from security firms, so I'm still a little bit sceptical. However, I'm risking the "You're anti-Apple!!!"-crap because it's looking more and more like this is an actual serious issue. Do with it as you please.

#### ".Oops": Glitch Forces Extension for New Suffixes

You're probably familiar with ".com" and ".org." How about ".oops"?

A technical glitch forced the abrupt shutdown of a system for letting companies and organizations propose new Internet domain name suffixes. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, which is in charge of domain names, said some private data may have been exposed.

ICANN has been taking applications for new suffixes to join ".com" and others in use. Up to 1,000 domain name suffixes could be added each year in the most sweeping change to the domain name system since its creation in the 1980s.

The idea is to let Las Vegas hotels, casinos and other attractions congregate around ".Vegas," or a company such as Canon Inc. draw customers to "cameras.Canon" or "printers.Canon." The new system will also make Chinese, Japanese and Swahili versions of ".com" possible.

The application deadline had been Thursday, but ICANN decided to shut the system down early after discovering the glitch. The system will reopen Tuesday, and the deadline has been extended to next Friday.

ICANN said the software glitch "allowed a limited number of users to view some other users' file names and user names in certain scenarios." It wasn't immediately clear whether that included proprietary information on the names of the bidders and their proposed suffixes. ICANN officials said Friday they had no immediate comment beyond the posted statement.

"Out of an abundance of caution, we took the system offline to protect applicant data," Chief Operating Officer Akram Atallah wrote on ICANN's website. "We are examining how this issue occurred and considering appropriate steps forward."

The glitch did not affect general availability of the Internet's domain name system - the databases that let Internet-connected computers know where to send email and locate websites. It also did not affect the ability to register new names under existing suffixes.

Rather, the glitch was with the software ICANN had set up to take applications for new suffixes.

After several years of discussion, ICANN opened a three-month application window in January. Names of bidders and proposed suffixes were to remain confidential until April 30, when ICANN had been scheduled to release the list for public comments and objections. It's not clear whether that date

will be changed because of the deadline extension.

The delay shouldn't have a major effect on the availability of new suffixes, as the new names wouldn't appear in general use until at least next spring anyhow.

### German Pirate Party Overtakes Greens

Germany's upstart Pirate Party has overtaken the Greens to become the third strongest political grouping in the country, according to a new poll.

The survey by Forsa for broadcaster RTL showed support for the Pirates, whose platform is based on internet freedom and more direct participation in politics, pushing up to 13 percent and outstripping the Greens for the first time.

An off-shoot of a party that was founded in Sweden six years ago, the German Pirates came out of nowhere last September to win seats in the city government in Berlin.

At first dismissed as a passing fad by the established parties, the Pirates followed up their success in Berlin with a strong showing in the state of Saarland last month and now look on track to make it into regional assemblies in two other states - North Rhine-Westphalia and Schleswig Holstein - next month.

Their rise has thrown the Greens in particular onto the defensive, threatening their hold on younger voters disillusioned with the two big parties - the Christian Democrats (CDU) and Social Democrats (SPD) - that have dominated post-war politics in Germany.

The Greens, who rose to prominence in the 1980s on a pacifist, anti-nuclear platform, are now struggling to differentiate themselves from the big established parties after CDU Chancellor Angela Merkel dropped her support for nuclear power last year following the Fukushima disaster in Japan.

"For many young people, the Greens have become an old party. The anti-nuclear theme just doesn't lure voters like it used to," said Manfred Guellner, director of Forsa.

The poll showed the Greens on 11 percent, just half the levels they were scoring last year in the immediate aftermath of Fukushima. The SPD stood at 24 percent and the far-left Left party on 8 percent.

The survey showed the Free Democrats (FDP), a business-friendly party whose support has collapsed over the past year amid policy missteps and infighting, back at the 5 percent level needed to enter parliament for the first time in nearly a year.

The FDP, junior partners to Merkel's CDU in the federal government in Berlin, may have lured back some traditional free-market supporters with their recent decision to veto state aid for sacked employees of bankrupt drug store firm Schlecker.

The return of the FDP above the 5 percent threshold and the rise of the

Pirates has raised the prospect of six party groupings - the CDU/CSU, SPD, Pirates, Greens, Left and FDP - regularly making it into German parliaments at the state and national level.

That would further complicate coalition-building and could increase the likelihood of so-called "grand coalitions" of the CDU and SPD being formed.

Merkel presided over such a coalition during her first term between 2005 and 2009, and a similar partnership of the center-right and center-left is seen by many as the most likely outcome of the next federal vote in 2013.

The Forsa survey put Merkel's CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), on a combined 36 percent.

#### At 90 Years Young, Betty White Joins Twitter

Betty White has just raised the average age of the Twitter community considerably.

The "Golden Girls" icon, who turned 90 years young in January, launched her official Twitter account Tuesday, offering an adoring public a glimpse into the still-spry actress' fertile mind, 140 characters at a time.

The actress's maiden tweet was a typical bit of witticism (or is that White-icism?) designed to enchant and delight the masses.

"Hello Twitter! And they said it would never happen. Oh wait, that was me," White cracked.

White's second tweet, about 45 minutes later, was more mercenary than whimsical, consisting of a plug for her geriatric hidden-camera show, "Betty White's Off Their Rockers."

"My new show 'Betty White's Off Their Rockers' airs 8 PM tomorrow on NBC... I'm new at this... ;)," White wrote.

New, and yet already so, so savvy at it, apparently...

Welcome to the Twitterverse, Ms. White. Just take a lesson from Anthony Weiner and remember that tweeting racy photos is probably not a wise idea.

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